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ABSTRACT

The organic theory of writing as a process and as a coherent whole implies that writing evolves from a writer's involvement with the subject. Kenneth Burke's theory of logology, the study of words about words, is a theory of composing that has invention at the center and which a writer can apply from beginning to end as needed. Since a student writes about perceptions in words, grappling with perception becomes grappling with words. To help the student, a heuristic device based on Burke's theory asks three questions: What goes with what? What opposes what? What follows or follows from what? This heuristic procedure aids the student in retrieving information stored in the mind, it draws attention to important information that can be acquired, and it prepares the student's mind for the intuition of an ordering principle, or hypothesis. Such logological analysis underscores the inseparability of invention, form, and style. Such a theory emphasizes creativity and imagination, helps eliminate dryness in expository writing, and helps generate meaningful material for essays. (TJ)

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Invention Beyond Prewriting: The Role of Invention Throughout the Composing Process

One of the most important recent shifts in the way we talk about writing is that from discussing a piece of writing as finished product to discussing that piece of writing in light of the process during which it evolves. Another such shift in emphasis in our talk about writing centers on the role of invention in the composing process--because teachers increasingly stress content over form in their students' writing, invention receives increased attention. And, as Richard Young points out, "It is no accident that the general shift in attention among rhetoricians from composed product to the composing process is occurring at the same time as the reemergence of invention as a rhetorical discipline. Invention requires a process view of rhetoric; and if the composing process is to be taught, rather than left to the student to be learned, arts associated with various stages of the process are necessary."[1]

In discussion of writing as process, the term "organic" crops up frequently. This term suggests a coherent whole, a unit which may not be arbitrarily divided without something of the whole being lost. Rather than implying that writing is a more or less mechanical activity (that is, that a piece of writing is erected according to a rigid, preconceived plan), an organic theory of composing implies that writing evolves from involvement, that a piece of writing derives naturally from a writer's involvement with his subject. So an essay is seen as the culmination of a process in which the writer grapples with his subject in an attempt to order it: the essay is the physical manifestation, the result, of that grappling. Implicit in this view of composing is the idea that all elements of the essay are so interrelated as to be inseparable, for

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example, that form or arrangement may not be arbitrarily imposed and that style may not be changed at whim to make a piece of writing "more effective." Any changes must be made with the writer's full awareness of his purpose, his audience, and so forth. In general, we may say that an organic theory of composing is one that

1. Presupposes that writing is a process that is fluid, cyclical, indivisible into discrete parts;

2. Presupposes that form and style are inherent in the material generated in the writer's exploration of his subject and are therefore dependent on invention;

3. Presupposes that content, as the result of the interaction of invention, form, and style, is predominant in the process;

4. Has some unifying principle at its core that informs discussion of the whole of the process.

In such a view of composing, invention assumes great importance, so much so that the role of invention reaches far beyond the writer's prewriting. To quote Richard Young again, "In this conception [of composing], a method of invention is seen as useful throughout the process, from beginning to end."[2] At present, there are no major rhetorics which present an organic theory of composing with as heavy an emphasis on invention as my definition and Young's statements imply as being essential.

During the 1960's invention enjoyed something of a renascence as more and more rhetoricans called for the emphasis of content over formulaic considerations in student writing.[3] In answer to this call, several important studies of invention were conducted, and numerous heuristic procedures were derived from them.[4] As a direct result of this ferment, the discussion of invention in most major texts became more comprehensive than it had been before, with many of these containing various heuristic procedures. There is little doubt that the authors of these texts intended these heuristics to help the student generate meaningful material for his writing, but the heuristics offered are helpful only to a point. Because the theory of invention and the heuristic

derived from it developed apart from these rhetorics and then was adopted by their authors, discussion of invention seems to be inserted into these texts rather than incorporated into them. Most of these texts approach writing as a process, but such insertion breaks the flow of this process-orientated discussion, with discussion of invention becoming more of an additional chapter than an integral part of a theory of composing. And none of these texts implies that invention is important, once the student is past the prewriting stage. What is needed, then, is a theory of composing at the center of which lies a method of invention the writer may apply from beginning to end. Such a theory may be based on Kenneth Burke's theory of logology, the study of words about words. Because we perceive our various worlds through language, language shapes reality for us; we order reality with words. Any piece of writing reports in words the writer's perceptions of reality, hence, logology as the study of words about words.

Logology is so key a term in Burke's dramatistic theory that eventually logology becomes synonymous with dramatism. Dramatism is the study of the drama of human relations, a drama best represented by poetry so that the dramatic situation is represented by words. Burke uses the term "poetry" generically; that is, any critical of imaginative piece of writing is, for Burke, poetry. Poetry he calls the "dancing of an attitude,"[5] a "stylized answer" to experience (PLF, p. 1), and a strategy to encompass a situation (PLF, p. 1). Because the situation or experience elicits from the poet an appropriate answer which he presents appropriately arranged and in an appropriate manner, the poem as answer or strategy has an organic unity of content, form, and style, with each of these elements seen necessarily in terms of the other two. All three have a common ground in the situation which moves the

poet to write, and as he creates the poem (as he invents it), he creates content (the poem as appropriate answer) that has at once form (an appropriate arrangement) and style (an appropriate manner). Burke's theory of composing as applied to poetry, then, is an organic theory which implies that content evolves from invention and that form and style are inherent in the created content. Invention stands as the key element of the process, and form and style, while so closely related to invention as to be inseparable from it, are suggested by and dependent upon it. Thus, the organicism of Burke's composing theory evolves from the role invention plays in the whole of the process--as the poet creates or invents content, the poem grows.

Under the umbrella of Burke's definition, we may study student essays as poetry, as stylized answers to experience. Because they are, ideally, imaginative works which grow out of a context, student essays are created or invented strategies to encompass situations. And with its methodology rooted in an organic theory of the composition of literature, Burkology may stand as the unifying principle for an organic theory of composing applicable in the writing class. Because he perceives reality in words, the student, like the poet, thinks about, speaks about, and writes about his perceptions in words, so that his grappling with his experience ultimately becomes his grappling with his own words. The student, then, may study thought, speech, and writing--that of others as well as his own--as logologic.

To help the student in this study, we may base a heuristic procedure on a tre-partite method of literary analysis Burke outlines in The Philosophy of Literary Form. Three questions, which have "remained as the backbone of Burke's critical practice," [6] constitute this method. By asking the first question--"What is vs. what?"--we may outline a work's "dramatic alignment"

(PLF, p. 69). That is, we may note what elements of a poem conflict with or oppose each other. The second question--"What goes with what?"--enables us to discover images, acts, characters, or situations that "cluster" around the dramatically opposed elements, thereby providing a fuller description of those elements (PLF, p. 20). The third question--"From what through what to what?" or "What follows or follows from what?"--enables us to trace the poem's development as it progresses from one event or scene to the next (PLF, pp. 70-71). And in examining this progression, we may examine not only matters of content but of form and style as well. Obviously, we may consider content by tracing the development of a theme in a poem. And we may consider form and style as well by considering the poem's arrangement as it develops a theme and by considering the manner of the presentation of that theme. This method of analysis, then, enables us to consider the organic unity of a poem, and because our consideration is the poet's words, we may label these three questions as "logological analysis."

With the addition of three clarifying questions, logological analysis may be developed into a potentially powerful heuristic procedure. The heuristic would assume this shape:

1. What goes with what? (What do you associate with what?)
2. What opposes what? (What do you not associate with what?)
3. What follows or follows from what? (What are the implications of what?)

In their important book on composing, Rhetoric: Discovery and Change, Young, Becker, and Pike present a concise statement of the function of a heuristic procedure:

> (1) It aids the investigator in retrieving information that he has stored in his mind. (When we have a problem, we generally know more that is relevant to it than we think we do, but we often have difficulty in retrieving the relevant information and bringing it to bear on the problem.)

(2) It draws attention to important information that the investigator does not possess but can acquire by direct observation, reading, experimentation, and so on.

(3) It prepares the investigator's mind for the intuition of an ordering principle, or hypothesis.[7]

And it is against these criteria that we may measure the potential usefulness of logological analysis as a heuristic device. Obviously, this means of analysis satisfies the first of these criteria in requiring the student to search his own mind for material pertinent to his subject. And by focusing him on the associations, oppositions (or qualifications), and implications he sees in the subject, it has great potential to help the student generate a mass of material about his subject. The device also satisfies the second requirement for, in his exploration of the subject, the student may well find gaps in his own knowledge to be filled by any method of research he chooses. But it especially speaks to the third by asking the student to make some sort of value judgment (by examining the implications of the subject), thereby leading him to discover that he just might have something to say after all, one of the most important, if not the most important, things a writer can discover. But so far, nothing is all that new--other heuristics also measure favorably against these criteria. Logological analysis appears to be only one more heuristic that probably will help the student amass material in his prewriting, until we return to the concept that is organic to a theory of composing and that it may inform the whole of the writing process, that the student may apply it in the various stages of the process.

As to its usefulness to the student in his prewriting, I think only one thing more need be said. The student may apply this heuristic in his considerations of his audience. As they do in his exploration of his subject, questions of association, dissociation, and implication may help the writer visualize his audience and then fit the material and his presentation of it to that audience.

In actually writing the essay, the student may apply the procedure as necessary to invent or generate sentences and paragraphs. By tracking down the implications of a thought, the writer may spin out sentences and paragraphs by exploring associations, dissociations (or qualifications or oppositions), and implications of the thought. In this tracking process, the student may develop larger and larger units of discourse until he spins out an essay. Further, the heuristic is available to the student whenever he revises as he considers the effectiveness of his writing, from the individual word, to the sentence, to the paragraph, to the whole of the essay. No matter whether engaged in compiling material, analyzing audience, generating sentences and paragraphs, or revising words, sentences, and paragraphs, the writer is engaged in invention, in creating and recreating a piece of writing, from his initial considerations of his subject through his final editing of the final draft. And logological analysis is a heuristic the student may apply in all these activities--it is a method of invention available to the student from the beginning to the end of his writing.

Logological analysis would also provide an orientation into the teaching of writing. It would, for example, help underscore the inseparability of invention, form, and style, which implies that to base a writing course on logology would require not the presentation of separate units on invention, form, and style, but discussion of all elements of writing at once as the student prepares to fulfill a writing assignment. Ideally, this would be the case, although in practice it may not be possible. But if we ground the student thoroughly in the organicism of writing, if we continually demonstrate that writing is a process that develops rather than a by-the-numbers activity that is developed formulaically, then we can demonstrate the logical necessity of the

student's spinning out his subject from his original thought about it. A teacher using logological analysis as the generating principle of writing would teach writing not in terms of building blocks (the A + B + C = ESSAY concept of writing) but in terms of the logical progression of "from what through what to what." So to teach a writing course within this particular Burkean framework would be to teach writing as a whole, a unified process.

More important than these considerations are what such a theory of composing holds for the student. For one thing, it would emphasize the writing the student engages is creative and imaginative, so it could help eliminate some of the dryness many students think to be inherent in expository writing. For another, this theory could go a long way toward helping the student generate meaningful material for his essays, because its heuristic calls for the student's personal response to his subject. And by stressing the study of language--not only the student's own words but those of others as well--this theory of composing may help make the student more critical of or more sensitive to language. With this heightened awareness, he may come to see the traps which lie in the misuse of language, and so learn to avoid them, or at least to be wary of them; and he may come to see the power language can give him and so learn to manipulate language (in the best sense of manipulation) to his great advantage. But perhaps the most profound implication is that this theory would speak to a very humanistic concern: because it would require the writer to confront himself directly, to examine in himself his own perceptions of reality and then to write about his findings, a Burkean theory of composing would have as its ultimate goal that the student gain self-knowledge that would ideally help him to better understand himself and his relationship to his world. This theory of composing could become, then, to borrow a term Burke applies to literature, "equipment for living" (PLF, p. 293).

NOTES

[1]Richard Young, "Invention: A Topographical Survey" in Gary Tate, ed. Teaching Composition: Ten Bibliographical Essays (Ft. Worth, Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), p. 33.

[2]Ibid, p. 34.

[3]Cf. Wayne Booth, "The Rhetorical Stance," College Composition and Communication, 14 (1963); Edward P.J. Corbett, "What is Being Revived," College Composition and Communication, 18 (1967); David V. Harrington, "Teaching Students the Art of Discovery," College Composition and Communication, 19 (1968); James M. McCrimmon, "Toward More Rewarding Emphases in the Teaching of Composition," in Virginia McDavid, ed., Language and Teaching: Essays in Honor of W. Wilbur Hatfield (Chicago: Chicago State College Press, 1969) and "Will the New Rhetorics Produce New Emphases in the Composition Class?" College Composition and Communication, 20 (1969). An especially good discussion of invention's revival and several articles on invention may be found in W. Ross Winterowd's Contemporary Rhetoric: A Conceptual Background with Readings (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975).

[4]Cf. D. Gordon Rohman and Albert J. Wlecke, Pre-Writing: The Construction and Application of Models for Concept Formation in Writing (Office of Edducation, U.S. Department of HEW, Project No. 2174, 1963). A summary of this study may be found in D. Gordon Rohman, "Pre-Writing: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process," College Composition and Communciation, 16 (1965). Cf. also Kenneth L. Pike, "A Linguistic Contribution to Composition," College Composition and Communication, 15 (1964) [rpt. in Tagmemics: The Study of Units Beyond the Sentence (NCTE, 1964). This booklet contains Pike's essay and three others derived from it.] and Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike, Rhetoric: Discovery and Change (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1970). Cf. also Edward P.J. Corbett, Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); and Richard L. Larson, "Discovery Through Questioning: A Plan for Teaching Rhetorical Invention," College English (Nov. 1968).

[5]Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form, 2nd ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), p. 9. Subsequent references to this work are to this edition and designated in the text as PLF.

[6]Phillip L. Dillman, "Motive for Metaphor: Kenneth Burke and the Psychology of Literary Form," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1971, p. 52.

[7]Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike, Rhetoric: Discovery and Change (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1970), p. 120.